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The Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence

China, the United States and the non-aligned role of Latin America in the global agentic race

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RESUMEN

This whitepaper analyzes the geopolitical configuration of artificial intelligence in the mid-2020s, articulated around two openly competing superpowers (**the United States and China**) and a series of regional actors negotiating their position. It argues that **Latin America** — by virtue of its non-aligned diplomatic tradition, its agricultural, mining and demographic capacity, and its lack of hegemonic ambition — has the historical opportunity to operate as a **third way** in the global agentic race, establishing simultaneous bilateral cooperation with Asia, MENA, Africa and the traditional poles. Five vectors of agentic foreign policy for the region are proposed, together with an Ibero-American institutional framework for multilateral governance.

Palabras clave: AI geopolitics - China - United States - Latin America - Non-alignment - Bilateral cooperation - Agentic Era - MENA - Chris Meniw - Technological sovereignty

> *"The AI race will not be won by two. It will be defined by many. And Latin America has something that neither Washington nor Beijing has: the freedom to talk to everyone without owing allegiance to any."*

— Chris Meniw

1. Introduction — a bipolar world with many actors

When the contemporary geopolitics of artificial intelligence is discussed, the debate tends to collapse into a false dichotomy: **United States versus China**. That simplification is analytically useful but strategically misleading. The global agentic race is being configured around two dominant poles in compute, foundational models and capital, but its effective outcome will depend critically on the behavior of a constellation of regional actors — India, the European Union, the Gulf states, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and **Latin America** — that have not yet fixed their definitive positioning.

This whitepaper articulates that configuration and proposes, specifically, a doctrine of agentic insertion for Ibero-America that takes advantage of its non-aligned diplomatic tradition and its distinctive productive profile. The **Agentic Era** will not be defined only in San Francisco or Shenzhen: it is also being defined by what each peripheral region decides to do with its negotiating capacity.

2. The race between superpowers

The United States maintains leadership in generalist foundational models (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google DeepMind, Meta AI), in venture capital applied to AI and in compute infrastructure (NVIDIA, hyperscalers). Its model is one of private innovation with reactive regulation and the export of capabilities via API and cloud.

China has consolidated a different strategy: state-enterprise integration, strong deployment of AI applied to manufacturing, surveillance and vertical agents, and gradual self-sufficiency in semiconductors in the face of U.S. export restrictions. Models such as DeepSeek, Qwen and the developments of Huawei and SenseTime show that China is not closing a technical gap: in several segments it already operates in competitive parallel.

The competition between the two powers is producing a **bifurcation of ecosystems**: technology stacks, standards, models and clouds that tend not to interoperate. Peripheral countries face pressure to align with one bloc or the other. The political question for Latin America is whether that binary alignment is inevitable or whether there is space for an **operational third way**.

3. The historical position of Latin America

Latin America has a consolidated diplomatic tradition of active non-alignment. From the creation of the Group of 77 at the UN, the leadership of Mexico and Argentina in the Non-Aligned Movement, to the Brazilian doctrine of "relative autonomy", the region has shown the capacity to negotiate simultaneously with antagonistic blocs without aligning itself fully with any of them.

Added to this is a distinctive productive profile: **agricultural export capacity** (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay), **strategic mineral resources** (lithium in the Argentina-Bolivia-Chile triangle, Chilean and Peruvian copper, Brazilian rare earths), **demographic and linguistic capacity** (more than 650 million Spanish and Portuguese speakers) and **absence of regional hegemonic ambition** that would generate distrust among other actors.

This combination is geopolitically rare: few regions of the world combine critical strategic resources with a diplomatic posture that does not threaten anyone.

4. Opportunities for bilateral cooperation with Asia and MENA

The non-aligned agentic doctrine allows Latin America to articulate simultaneous bilateral agreements with actors that are traditionally difficult to combine:

With China: access to compute infrastructure, technology transfer in AI applied to manufacturing and agriculture, financing of regional data centers.

With the United States: access to generalist foundational models, integration with the venture capital ecosystem, cooperation in academic research.

With the Gulf states (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar): abundant sovereign capital seeking diversification toward AI, with specific interest in Latin American agro-industrial projects.

With India: south-south cooperation in technical talent, multilingual models of low compute cost, massive professional training.

With Israel and Singapore: exchange in AI applied to water, security and urban efficiency.

No single country can sustain five simultaneous bilateral fronts. Ibero-America as a coordinated bloc can.

5. The five vectors of agentic foreign policy

(i) Sovereignty over primary data. Bilateral agreements that guarantee that data generated in Latin American territory remains under regional jurisdiction, regardless of which company processes it.

(ii) Regional distributed compute. Construction of data center infrastructure in at least five Latin American countries, with local clean energy, financed by a mix of Chinese, Emirati, Brazilian and Western private capital.

(iii) Ibero-American multilingual models. Joint development of foundational models specifically trained in Spanish, Portuguese and majority indigenous languages (Quechua, Guaraní, Nahuatl, Aymara).

(iv) Own regulatory standards. An Ibero-American regulatory framework for AI that does not mechanically replicate the European AI Act, the fragmented U.S. regulation or the centralized Chinese model, but rather articulates its own principles.

(v) Academic diplomacy. A regional university network with active cooperation with institutions in China, India, MENA, Europe and the U.S. simultaneously, maintaining positions of academic neutrality.

6. Proposed Ibero-American institutional framework

Operational implementation requires an institutional body. I propose the creation of an **Ibero-American Council on Artificial Intelligence (CIIA)** with a rotating seat among five capitals (Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Madrid, São Paulo, Bogotá), with a mandate to coordinate regional agentic foreign policy, negotiate bilateral agreements as a bloc, set common minimum regulatory standards and operate as the single interlocutor with the superpowers.

The CIIA does not seek to create a hegemonic Latin American AI. It seeks to preserve the region's negotiating capacity vis-à-vis actors that individually surpass it in economic and technical scale. The strength is structural: to talk with many without owing forced allegiance to any.

7. Risks and adverse scenarios

Three main risks may frustrate this doctrine. **(a) Unilateral capture**: a key country (say Brazil or Mexico) decides to align fully with one bloc and breaks regional unity. **(b) Regulatory fragmentation**: each country establishes incompatible frameworks, weakening negotiating capacity. **(c) Asymmetric financial dependence**: investment capital comes mostly from a single source and conditions decisions.

Mitigation of these risks requires sustained political will at the regional presidential level and a CIIA mandate that transcends individual electoral cycles.

8. Conclusions

The geopolitics of artificial intelligence is not only a competition between the United States and China. It is a reconfiguration of the world order in which peripheral actors have, for the first time in decades, real capacity to define their own strategic positioning.

Latin America, given its productive profile, its non-aligned diplomatic tradition and its demographic and linguistic capacity, has the historical opportunity to operate as an operational third way in the **Agentic Era**. Not as a regional hegemonic power, not as a satellite of any bloc: as a good-faith interlocutor with all.

The window of opportunity is narrow. The decisions made between 2026 and 2030 will fix the Latin American position in the global agentic order during the next three decades.

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